



In Touch South India

Headlines from the U.S. Consulate General Chennai



June— July 2007

Volume: IV, Issue: 3

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

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<http://americanlibrary.in.library.net>

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>

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<http://buyusa.gov/india>

Consulate Phone Number:

044-2857-4000

Consulate Fax Number:

044-2811-2020

Upcoming Films:

Stories of Crime (Bi-weekly Friday Films)



June 8th

The First Great Train Robbery



June 22nd

Sudden Impact

June 29th

Kaleidoscope

Co-sponsored by
Madras Film Society and
Indo-Cine Appreciation Foun-
dation

All films at 6:30 p.m.
at Film Chamber Theater
Gemini Circle Chennai - 6

Seats on a first come first
served basis

Earth Day 2007

Earth Day is a global celebration of the environment and a chance for us to assess the work still needed to protect the natural gifts of our planet. When Earth Day began in the U.S. on April 22, 1970, it was a time when U.S. cities were buried under their own smog and polluted rivers caught fire. This led to a massive grassroots protest against these conditions – and Earth Day was born. Since then, the citizens and the government of the United States decided to fight back and through their combined efforts have made significant strides in cleaning up America's rivers and lakes, protecting our wildlife and their natural habitats, and preserving our National Parks. What began as a day of protest has evolved into an occasion to draw attention to current local and global environmental prob-

lems and discuss solutions. U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide take the opportunity on Earth Day to raise environmental awareness and highlight joint environmental initiatives.

The Consulate General in Chennai celebrated Earth Day 2007 in a number of ways. First, we invited students to participate in an international art competition held by the U.S. Department of State for children between 10 and 15 years of age based on the theme, "What is important to you about our environment?" We invited schools across South India to participate and received an overwhelming response from fifteen schools with 47 beautiful entries. Renowned Indian painter and Art Director Mr. Thota Tharani participated in the judging along

(Continued on page 2)



Painting by Master Ashwin selected for display at U.S. State Department, Washington D.C.



Summer brings a time of transition at the Consulate General as we say farewell to American colleagues who are completing their assignments in Chennai and are moving on to other locations. At the same time we welcome new colleagues coming to begin their Chennai postings. During the next few months ten American officers will depart after each spending two very busy and eventful years in South India. All have made important contributions to our efforts to offer better visa services, to reach out to the people of South India with information about America, and to welcome and support American visitors, businesspeople and officials who came here to see the remarkable growth and advances taking place. We thank our departing colleagues for their hard work and many contributions. I am sure they depart with rich and long-lasting memories of their time spent here and the people of South India.

We also welcome the new officers who are arriving. A fascinating and rewarding experience awaits them. During the coming months I hope that you, our readers, will have opportunities to meet them and to help make their time here meaningful and enjoyable.

-David T. Hopper, Consul General

with Consul General David Hopper and members of the Public Affairs Section. They selected six semi-finalists out of which



Artist Master Ashwin

one by Master Ashwin (PSBBSS, T. Nagar, Chennai) was selected by the Embassy in New Delhi to enter the international competition and had the honor of being displayed at the State Department headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The children provided a vision of what they want their environment to look like -- quite a tall order. The U.S. Consulate General also reached

out to adults, hosting a discussion among experts on "Clean Energy Initiatives." Held on the heels of the first renewable energy trade mission to India by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce, the event highlighted burgeoning U.S.-India clean energy collaboration. During the event, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in the U.S. exchanged information with Indian government, private sector and civil society partners on topics ranging from wind and solar energy prospects, green building construction, energy efficiency in municipal infrastructure to bio-fuels, clean energy technologies and the need to adopt a comprehensive renewable energy strategy. The lively discussion brought together experts from across South India and facilitated a conversation all agreed would continue and would lead to concrete proposals and action.

American National Library Week

The American Library hosted a number of events for the reading public during American National Library Week, April 16-20, 2007. Librarian and educator Professor



S. Parthasarathy (photo) led discussions on current trends in library services, especially in light of rapid advances in information technology. Library Director Mr. Jagadish and his staff conducted orientation talks for individuals and institutions about the resources and services available at the Library, and arranged several video screenings for visitors.

The Library organized a roundtable discussion, based on the electronic journal titled *Benefits of Trade: Costs of Protectionism*, in collaboration with the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, Chennai. Dr. Sankaran Raghunathan led a lively debate with economists, business executives and journalists. The success of the event spurred the American Library to decide to conduct monthly thematic roundtable discussions in the future.

Positive Images



U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Geoff Pyatt opens new visa windows to better serve the public in Chennai



Thota Tharani and others judging for the Earth Day 2007 international art competition at the U.S. Consulate General—Chennai



Assistant Secretary of Commerce David Bohigian, along with David Hopper and Ajit Chordia, planting a sapling at Chennai's Olympia Technology Park, which received a gold rating from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Identity and Globalization

A travel writer or a writer who travels? An expert on the African-American experience or an expert on none other than Eddy Harris's experience? American author Eddy Harris enthralled audiences across South India with his insights on these and other issues. Harris



My Culture is the American Culture : Eddy L. Harris
Photo Credit : The Hindu

visited Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad from May 2-7, 2007, interacting with book lovers, writers, playwrights, academics, students and the general public at each stop.

Many of the South Indians that Mr. Harris met questioned him about his identity as an African-American and the status of black Americans in the United States. Harris, skeptical of a so-called "black experience," preferred to comment on "the Eddy Harris experience" of growing up in a happy middle-class family and leading a free and independent writer's life. Harris did offer his observation that race relations in the U.S. are much improved since his father's generation, stating that while Martin Luther King's struggle for social and political rights is behind us, many African-Americans still face daunting economic challenges.

Though much of his writing is based on his extensive travels throughout Africa and the U.S., including a solo canoe expedition down the entire length of the Mississippi River and a motorcycle tour of the American South, Harris does not consider himself a travel writer; *Mississippi Solo*, *Native Stranger*, *Still Life in Harlem*, and *Jupiter et Moi* are as much about the inner journey as the external one. Breaking stereotypes and defying categorization, these books are a fascinating read.

Consular Corner:

"No shortcuts" to U.S. visas

On May 15, American Chargé d'Affaires Geoff Pyatt inaugurated new facilities at the Consulate General in Chennai to help meet the burgeoning demand for U.S. visas. In his remarks, he noted that while the U.S. welcomes more Indian tourists, students and businesspeople, those who present false documents may become permanently ineligible to enter the United States.

Mr. Pyatt noted that demand for U.S. visas in India has increased by 30 percent in the last year, and the U.S. Embassy and Consulates now process 600,000 visas a year. He said: "We are happy that so many want to visit the United States, and we encourage all legitimate travel." Mr. Pyatt cut a ribbon to inaugurate six additional windows, making visa processing in Chennai more efficient. He said, "We are serving the public faster and better." He also mentioned that recent improvements were made to provide shelter and more comfort for the some 1,200 visa applicants who visit the Consulate every day.

Mr. Pyatt stressed, however, that while visa interview appointments now are more readily available and processing more efficient, U.S. immigration laws have not changed. He cautioned against applicants' using unscrupulous agents or brokers who create the false impression that they can help in getting a visa. He said: "They are committing consumer fraud. Those who pay them and submit false papers do so at great risk."

U.S. Consul General in Chennai, David T. Hopper, who was also present at the ceremony, added: "Our best advice to visa applicants is to obtain accurate, reliable and free information directly from us, from our web site or and from our visa appointment contractor, Visa Facilitation Services, VFS. Tell the truth on the visa forms and in the visa interview. Present only genuine documents."

"Outside of a dog, a man's best friend is a book. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read." (Groucho Marx)

Kelly Kopcial
Vice Consul

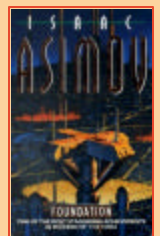
The Prestige
by Christopher Priest



In London, at the end of the 19th century, two rival stage magicians-- Borden and Angier-- compete for fame, fortune, and the ultimate illusion. A tragic event sets them at odds early in their careers, and their rivalry only escalates over the decades. Even as they dazzle audiences with seemingly impossible illusions, the two men work to discover each other's professional and personal secrets. We experience the same story-- told in two very different ways -- as we read the journals of both magicians. We come to understand the magic tricks that are presented on stage, but it is the men's off-stage lives that are of most interest. Priest uses the sleight-of-hand of an expert illusionist to bring the story to its surprising conclusion.

Damon Kitterman
Vice Consul

Foundation
by Isaac Asimov



Given our rapid rate of scientific advance over the last 50 years, it is interesting to look back on the famous saga written during World War II by one of the best selling science fiction authors of all time. Fast forward 20,000 years. The 12,000-year-old galactic empire is in decay. Hari Seldon, the great mathematician, has perfected the science of "psychohistory," using complex mathematical equations to predict the future based on past events. Predicting the imminent collapse of society, Hari Seldon and his team of scientists and historians are working to preserve all scientific knowledge in one great Encyclopedia Galactica, before the galaxy collapses into chaos. Asimov's own predictions about future scientific trends have been chillingly accurate.

In Remembrance



The whole world was shocked on April 16 when we learned about the massacre at Virginia Tech. And when we found out that Professor G.V. Loganathan, who hailed from Erode District, Tamil Nadu, was one of the victims, many in South India joined the multitude of mourners.

Professor Loganathan won numerous awards during the 24 years he taught at Virginia Tech. For him teaching was not merely a job; it was a calling. He had a ready smile and an easy, informal relationship with his students. He was always willing to go the extra mile outside the classroom – meeting with students after hours, lending them books to prepare for an examination or reviewing draft after draft of a doctoral candidate's dissertation. His e-mail correspondence with students, which could take place in the middle of the night, often began with, "Let me give you some brotherly advice."

It is no wonder that the university was inundated with condolence messages from former students from all over the world or that more than 600 mourners, including family, friends, colleagues and students, attended Professor Loganathan's funeral ceremony in Blacksburg, Virginia, on April 21. One of the mourners, Newland Agenowosi, a native of Ghana who had studied under Professor Loganathan for six years, packed up his wife and three small children to drive five hours to the funeral. The words an emotional Mr. Agenowosi managed to muster were: "I had to be here. It was the least I could do."

Over the years Professor Loganathan studied and taught in the United States, he had become an American. But he was also an Indian to the core, a lover of cricket and of Tamil movies, especially those starring M.G. Ramachandran and Sivaji Ganesan. He visited India every few years where his loving mother, father and many other family members remained. He took a special interest in helping one of his cousins who has a physical disability.

Consul General David T. Hopper, speaking at PSG Institute of Management in Coimbatore on May 19, noted that as India and the United States grow closer, we will rejoice together in many things, but, like with a family, the time will come, inevitably, to mourn together. This is such a time. And if we cannot make sense of the way Professor Loganathan died, we can certainly make sense of the way he lived – a life dedicated to the betterment of others and in which he gave back a hundred-fold what he had received. Both Indians and Americans are rightly proud to call Professor Loganathan their own.

American Poems in Tamil

We were pleased to hear recently from an old friend of the American Consulate General, Dr. R. Ganapathy, former professor of English at Annamalai University and now "retired" in Puducherry. We put retired in quotes because Dr. Ganapathy, at age 76, continues to be very active and has kept up his life-long love affair with two languages, English and Tamil. He wrote in part:

"In my nearly 40 years of teaching, research, publications, attending seminars, conferences, workshops, and my teaching English and studying American Literature, at the University of Utah, I have had been interested in translations – from Tamil to English, and from English to Tamil. My translations of Modern Tamil Works into English have been published under very distinguished auspices, but not yet, my translations of American Works into Tamil!"

Presently, I have a collection of 111 American Poems translated into Tamil – from Poe, Emerson, Whitman, Emily Dickinson, through Frost, Sandburg, Crane, Millay, Robinson, Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Ransom, Untermeyer, Macleish, Cummings, to Black American Poets like Mackay, Cullen, Hughes, Brooks, Maya Angelou, and others, under three broad Sections: 1. 19th Century American Poetry, 2. 20th Century American Poetry, and, 3. Afro-American Poetry.

Each division has a succinct but informative introduction in Tamil. The American poem and the translation are presented on the same page. The translated American poems were hand-picked by me, based on my vast experience, and these are done by me with great personal relish and delight. The purpose is to let the Tamils have a taste of American Poetry through their mother tongue, and enjoy them."

As of now, Dr. Ganapathy has not found a publisher for his latest work, one we believe would be of great interest to the millions of Tamil-speaking poetry lovers. A week after we received Dr. Ganapathy's letter, the first Tamil version of the Concise Encyclopedia Britannica was released. Why not now a Tamil translation of the best of American poetry?

Please Write!

In this issue and the two before it, we have used the space above to publish an interesting letter from one of our readers. We want to thank these readers and the many others who took the time to write. Please keep writing to let us know what you like, don't like, want to see in future editions, or simply to provide your perspective on an article. Letters can be sent by e-mail, fax or to the mailing address given below. Letters selected for publication may be edited at our discretion.